



ESSENTIALS
FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Group Leader Notebook

Contents

The Essentials	5
Train	6
Shepherd	8
Meet	10
Mobilize	12
Growth Path Steps	14
Group Attendance	16
How to Read the Bible	

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THE ESSENTIALS

What is our purpose?

To be a family of love that cooperates with God in making fully devoted fruitful followers of Christ.

What is a small group?

A small group is a weekly gathering that leads people to begin, connect, grow, engage and disciple together.

Who are small group leaders?

Small group leaders are shepherds who accept responsibility for leading themselves and others to become fully devoted fruitful followers of Christ.

What are the four essentials for small group leaders?

1. TRAIN Myself for Godliness (daily)

Set a daily time to meet with the Lord. "Train yourself to be godly...Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1Timothy 4:7-16)

2. SHEPHERD My People (weekly)

This is done before and after your weekly meeting. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve." (1Peter 5:2-3)

3. MEET With My Group (weekly)

This is done during your weekly meeting. "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." (Acts 20:20)

4. MOBILIZE Them to Maturity (seasonally)

This is done throughout the semester. "...prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-13)

ESSENTIAL #1 TRAIN

In his letter to Timothy, Paul, his mentor, instructs him to train himself for godliness. Godliness is characterized by two things: our attitude and our actions. We must have an attitude of reverence and respect for God, what the Bible refers to as the “fear of God.” Second, our actions must be pleasing to Him. Much like a runner prepares for a race or a musician practices for a performance, leaders must train themselves for spiritual growth. “Train yourself to be godly... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1Timothy 4:7-16)

Training for Spiritual Growth

Your spiritual life is like caring for a plant. If you neglect it, you will shrivel up, not bear fruit and eventually die. Just as a plant needs good soil, water and sunlight to grow, your spiritual life needs resources in order to grow. We grow through reading God’s word, praying and listening to God, and worshiping God in everything that we say and do. Let’s take a look at what Paul’s tells Timothy about his spiritual growth.

A Good Servant of Jesus (1 Timothy 4:6-16)

6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1. Spiritual Growth is my **RESPONSIBILITY**. (v7)
2. Spiritual training is worth the **INVESTMENT** of my time, both now and for eternity. (v8)
3. As you lead a small group, flow in your **GIFTING** and allow others to compliment your gifting. (v14)
4. As I fully engage in my spiritual training, I must commit to being **TRANSPARENT** with those in my small group so they can see my spiritual growth and progress. (v15)
5. Keeping a close eye on my **LIFE and TEACHING** over the long haul will save my life and those that I shepherd. (v16)

Practical - 5 areas of training for my life:

- Speech Life Love Faith Purity
- Devote yourself to three things
- Reading God’s Word
- Proclaiming God’s Word
- Teaching God’s Word

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ESSENTIAL #2 SHEPHERD

The picture of a shepherd and sheep is used throughout the Bible. Not only is it an image of a caring small group leader, but it is also the image that God uses to relate to his people. Psalm 23 says, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me” (John 10:14, ESV).

Later on, Jesus would go to his disciple Peter and ask him to feed and care for His sheep. “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” (1Peter 5:2-3)

The Head, Heart and Hands of a Shepherd

Leading a small group is more than a 2 hour a week Bible study. Shepherding happens before and after your regular meeting and often takes place outside of the group. Sundays are a great time to search for new people or people who haven’t connected yet. Walk slowly through the crowd; take 3 minutes to talk only to new people (don’t just talk with your friends); pray with people at the altar and follow up with them that week.

The Lord is My Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-4)

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16)

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

1. **PROGRESS:** A shepherd leads people to their next step. (v2, 3)

2. **PRESENCE:** A shepherd walks with people through tough and trying times. (v4)

3. **PROVIDE:** A shepherd gives up their life (time, talents, treasures) for others. (v11)

4. **PROTECT:** A shepherd watches out for others and protects people from danger. (v12-13)

5. **PROMOTE:** A shepherd reaches out to others and invites them into the group. (v16)

Practical - How are you working the list?

- MAKE a list of names of everyone in your small group and people you are thinking about inviting to join the group.
- PRAY over the list every day and for each person by name.
- CONTACT the list every week via email, text, phone, Facebook, etc. Plan to visit or meet with each person in your small group at least once during the semester
- Tip: Communicate with people the way they want to be communicated with.

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ESSENTIAL #3 MEET

When the church was birthed in the book of Acts, they were meeting in homes out of necessity. The church began as a movement of small groups! “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

These four elements made up a small group meeting: God’s Word, Fellowship, Communion and Prayer. “You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20)

The 4 W’s of a Winning Small Group

Throughout the Bible we see that God uses two things to guide His people: a leader and a team. Without a leader, the group will not succeed. Without a team, the leader will grow tired and burn out. As you gather your small group, look for people you can delegate responsibility to and allow others to take ownership of the group. In doing this, you not only share the load, you also ensure that you will have at least 3-5 people every week at your group!

The Fellowship of the Believers (Acts 2:42-47, ESV)

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

1. WELCOME (15-20 minutes)

The host welcomes people and makes sure everything smells good, sounds good, tastes good, looks good, feels good.

2. WORSHIP (10-15 minutes)

Don’t take prayer requests first! Play a CD or use a YouTube worship playlist to help people focus their hearts and minds on God.

3. WORKS (10-15 minutes)

Ask each person to share what steps they are taking in their faith. Remind the group about upcoming events or announcements.

4. WORD (45-60 minutes)

Get people talking and opening up. Use an icebreaker question to get started and then ask open-ended questions for people to discuss the Bible together. No preaching!

Practical - Helpful Tips for Healthy Small Groups

- Start and end on time, even if people are late.
- Create a C.O.R.E. of people who are Committed, Others-minded, Reliable & Entrusted. Share the load and get others involved in roles: host, caller, greeter, assistant, refreshments, etc.
- Remind the group of the vision every week. Prepare to multiply by inviting new people at church to your group regularly. Look for an apprentice leader who could start a new group.

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ESSENTIAL #4 MOBILIZE

It is through small groups that people grow to understand and apply God’s Word. As they experience and form meaningful relationships, they are strengthened and encouraged in their faith. Proverbs 21:17 tells us, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” As small group leaders, we equip and empower the people in our group to do the work that God has called them to do, fulfilling their ministry in the church and their mission in the world.

“Prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12-13)

MOBILIZING YOUR GROUP FOR MISSION

A group that is moving is a group that is growing. It’s easy to get stuck in a rut and become stagnate or comfortable with your faith. A small group leader helps people get unstuck by challenging and encouraging them to continue going forward and to take their next step of faith.

Equipping the Saints (Ephesians 4:11-16)

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

1. **ENVISIONING:** “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost.” (Luke 19:10)

2. **ENCOURAGING:** Paul wrote, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5-6)

3. **EQUIPPING:** Paul wrote, “Equipping the saints for the work of service for the building up of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11,12)

4. **EMPOWERING:** Paul prayed, “Strengthen with all power according to His glorious might for the obtaining of all steadfastness and patience with joy.” (Colossians 1:11)

5. **ENTRUSTING:** Paul wrote, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Practical - Questions for Mobilizing Your Group

- How are you growing in your faith? What is the next step you feel God is leading you to take?
- What is God saying to you and what are you doing about it?
- What bold step would you take if you knew you couldn’t fail? How can I help you take that step?
- For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10).

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GROWTH PATH STEPS (GPS)

Navigating life can be difficult. Finding your way at New Life is simple! Our purpose is to be a family of love, that cooperates with God in making fully devoted fruitful followers of Christ. The **Growth Path Steps** is a guide to help you discover and take your next step in this journey. Read through the steps below, check some of the boxes, and share your next step with your group.



BEGIN

Every journey has a starting point. In this step of your growth you are boldly stating that Jesus is the Lord of your life, and you are being obedient to Jesus' command to be baptized. In your baptism you are symbolically putting to death your old life, so that you can fully live out the new life you've been given in Jesus. **My NEXT STEP is to...**

- Read through the Gospel of John in the Bible.
- Attend a worship service every Sunday.
- Talk through my understanding of Jesus with someone from church.
- Make the decision to turn from my old ways and completely surrender my life to Jesus.
- Begin working through the BEGIN First Steps book with a mentor and sign up for the next baptism.

CONNECT

We were made to be in community. The church is perfectly designed to allow the most diverse collection of people to learn and grow from each other's mistakes and victories. Now that you have been given a new life, it's time to connect with others who are living their lives in the same direction as you! **My NEXT STEP is to...**

- Make a first time visit to a group this week.
- Commit to attend a group every week this season.
- Invite someone with me to group.
- Assist my group leader with the group.
- Attend a Discover New Life class and become a member.

GROW

We are never done growing in Christ. As disciples, or students of Jesus, we need to be constantly looking for opportunities to grow deeper in our relationship with Him. In this step you are developing the habits of a healthy disciple and practices that draw you closer to God. **My NEXT STEP is to...**

- Work through the GROW First Steps book with a mentor.
- Attend a men's or women's retreat this Spring.
- Pick up and complete a Scripture Reading Plan.
- Spend _____ minutes everyday reading my Bible and praying.
- Attend a training or growth class offered at New Life.

ENGAGE

You have gifts, talents, and abilities! God created you that way so that you could engage this world as a representative of Jesus. The Spirit of God is working through you from the inside-out to see your new life used for a purpose. At this step you are using your talents to reach out and impact the lives of others in your local church, family, and community. **My NEXT STEP is to...**

- Find an opportunity to serve in a ministry at my church.
- Engage my family, friends, neighborhood, and workplace with God's mission.
- Invite _____ to New Life this Sunday.
- Start a conversation with _____ and share my faith story with them.
- Commit to sharing my faith once a week.

DISCIPLE

Discipleship is not the finish line. We are called to make disciples who make disciples. In this step you will be taking on a lifestyle of investing in people around you who are just beginning their journey of being fully devoted followers of Jesus. Get ready to enter the baptism waters again, but this time with a new disciple that you are taking under your wing. **My NEXT STEP is to...**

- Work through the DISCIPLE First Steps book with a mentor for the next six weeks.
- Sign up to become a mentor.
- Contact _____ and ask them if I can mentor them toward baptism.
- Attend a group leaders training and start a new group.
- Sign up to go on a mission trip being offered at New Life.

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

- 1. Set a Time:** Make an appointment with God that you intend to keep.
- 2. Set a Place:** Find a place free from distractions that allows you to focus on God.
- 3. Set a Plan:** Have an intentional strategy of what you will do during this time.
- 4. Choose a Partner:** Find someone who will ask you about how you are doing so that you can encourage one another and share what God is showing you.

I will read my Bible ____ days a week, starting at ____:____ and read for ____ minutes a day.

Use S.O.A.P. When Reading the Bible

We read the Bible for more than just information. In order for God's Word to transform us we must reflect and meditate on what we are learning. S.O.A.P. is a simple approach to use when reading the Bible.

Scripture - What did I read?

Write down the date and passage you read from God's Word each day.

Observation - What did I see?

Write down a few notes of what impacted you from the passage.

Application - What will I do?

Write down a sentence for how you will take action on what you read.

Prayer - Ask God for help.

Write a short prayer asking God to help you put into practice what you learned.

Go to Bible.com for a free Bible app with hundreds of translations and languages, plus audio, video, and more!

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